

American Printing House for the Blind

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Training for Increasing Braille Reading Rates

Summary: VRA RD-1086s-63

Braille reading is exceptionally slow when compared with print reading. The resulting gap in rate of information intake between the blind and the normally sighted has often been cited as a cause of educational retardation in the former. The literature on print reading contains a number of studies reporting the successful use of controlled exposure devices in training programs for increasing reading rates. No such studies have been made for braille reading. The purpose of this project was to study the effects on braille reading speed of training of two types, i.e., reading practice under conditions of controlled exposure of reading materials and reading practice under conditions where speed of reading was paced by a mechanical device.

In the first study an experimental group of 15 subjects from grades 6-12 were matched with a control group on grade level and scores from a test of reading speed and reading comprehension. The experimental group then practiced reading braille materials exposed for controlled periods of time. As training progressed, the reading materials gradually changed from short braille words to relatively long braille phrases. The time of exposure of materials gradually and relatively was decreased throughout training. The net effect was to force the experimental subjects to read material of increasing length in shorter periods. The total training consisted of 22 one-half hour periods on successive school days.

Immediately following training and at periods of 30 days and 60 days thereafter, both experimental and control groups were retested, with three equivalent forms of the test used to match the groups prior to training. To control possible differences in motivation between the groups, the two groups were tested jointly and a monetary reward given to the three subjects from either group exhibiting the greatest increment in speed over initial testing with no loss in comprehension.. Under this condition, both experimental and control groups showed increases in reading speed of approximately 25%, however, no differences attributable to training could be discerned between the groups for any of the three retests.

In the second experiment, an experimental group of eight fast and eight slow braille readers from grades 6-12 were matched with a control group of sixteen other braille readers on grade level and test scores for reading speed and reading comprehension. Both groups then were retested jointly on an equivalent form of the matching test under motivated conditions, i.e., those three subjects from either group who most increased their reading speeds over their initial tests with no loss in comprehension received a monetary reward.

The experimental group then participated in 22 one-half hour training sessions held on consecutive school days. Training consisted of reading literary material presented under conditions of successively increasing rates of speed. Both groups exhibited an increase of about 25% when retested under motivated conditions prior to training. Tests following training indicated that fast braille readers exhibited small significant increases in reading speed following training but that slow readers showed no such change.

The results of the studies indicate that of all the variables studied, motivation appears most critical in its effects on reading speeds. That while training as defined in the study had little or no effect, additional research utilizing different training schedules and different types of materials might demonstrate increases in braille reading speeds.

